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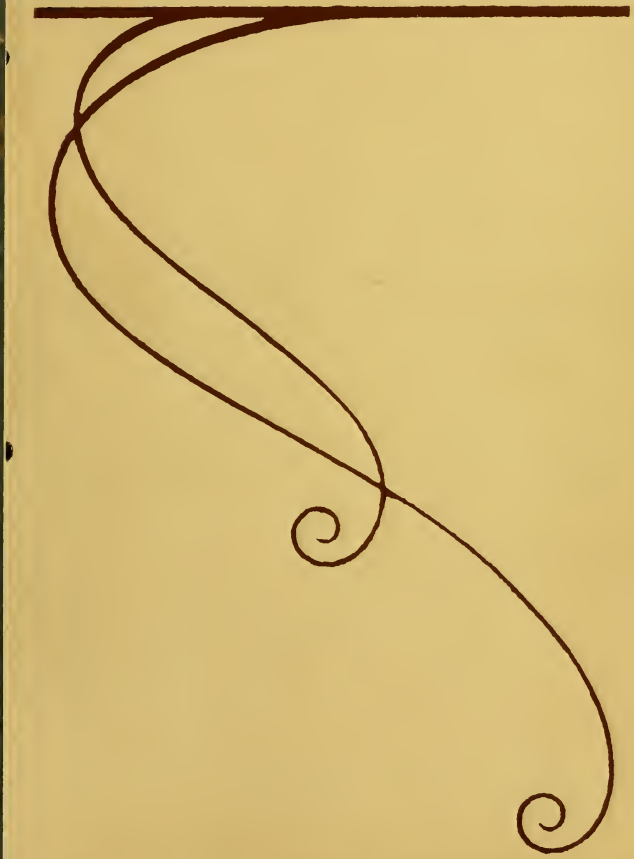
ORTH-SIDE CEDARS



NORTH-SIDE CEDARS

RIMED AND PHOTOGRAPHED
IN HUNTINGTON TOWN
ON LONG ISLAND

Alice Melissa Borland

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SPRINGING from earth as lightly
As forest creatures play;
Sedate as old friends musing
The things they need not say;
With dignity, with jaunty grace,
With grave or canny mien—
With individuality,
They wear their sober green.

Not noble in the fashion
  Of elm and oak or pine,
But a comely clan, these cedars,
  Of long and honored line;
And whether clumped in companies
  Or faring forth alone,
Social or solitary,
  They 've character of their own.

Freakish, you say? Well, maybe;
And maybe brave and true—
Reaching for some ideal,
Striving and missing too,
And on and on pursuing,
While endlessly they toil
Deep down, with wiry fingers,
Binding the shifty soil.

Some testify of conflict
With foes that blight and blast;
Still fighting for a future
While frank about their past,
Tell too of life tenacious,
Undaunted seem to say—
Environment may hammer,
Good heart will have his day.

Stanch old sea-captains some are,
  Sun-wizened, tempest-scarred;
Some are the laddies drilling,
  In rank or file, on guard;
Some might be village magnates,
  So prosperously they stand;
And some are we plain farmers,
  Knowing who owns the land.

Some draw like spires toward heaven,
  Some broaden toward their kind,
Some of the earth are earthy;
  Now and again you 'll find
Halves all askew, mismated,
  Yet somehow and of course
Growing along together,
  Undreaming of divorce.

The stalwart, tranquil cedars;
The younglings smart and slim;
The groups and pairs of sisters,
Symmetrical and trim;
The rough-and-tumble urchins,
Careless of tousled hair;
The midgets sitting straight up
In the grass here and there —

'T is with a sort of kinship
I love them every one.
How fine the breath of cedar trees
When basking in the sun!
How friendly is their shelter
From northeasters austere!
The robins need no telling,
All winter some stay here.

My forefathers are buried
  Under this island sod;
One built on that neck yonder
  In sixteen-sixty-odd;
No one knows where his grave is;
  It were not strange, maybe,
Should his earthly substance live to-day
  In some sturdy cedar tree.

Along this shore are cedars
That all the sailors know;
And some are ancient landmarks
Recorded long ago;

When these old trees were saplings
Great Liberty was young;
They caught the smoke of battle
And thrilled when peace bells rung.

Our cedars have grand kinsfolk
  Age-old and far away
In Oregon, on Lebanon,
  (You 've seen them, do you say?)

Giants and kings that tower
And dwell in majesty;
My neighbor cedars speak of them
And of more yet, to me.

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